

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11

ACDA-12 IO-13 HA-05 AID-05 MCT-01 /104 W

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 2999

EO 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT, SHUM, CASC, HO

SUBJECT: CHURCH PROTESTS FATHER BERTRAND (BELTRAN) DEPORTATION

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 2708, (B) 76 MANAGUA 5784, (C) 77 TEGUCIGALPA 39

17

1. SUMMARY: BOTH A CHURCH ORGANIZATION AND THE ARCHBISHOP AS WELL AS PRESS EDITORIALS HAVE PROTESTED DEPORTATION OF FATHER BERTRAND. EMBASSY IS SEEKING MORE DETAILED INFORMATION FROM IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES BUT REPORT MAY BE DELAYED BECAUSE THAT OFFICE IS IN MIDST OF MOVING TO NEW LOCATION.

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

2. ACCORDING TO A SPOKESMAN FOR THE HONDURAN CHURCH'S NATIONAL PASTORAL COMMISSION, ARCHBISHOP HECTOR SANTOS HAS WRITTEN CHIEF OF STATE GENERAL MELGAR ASKING FOR AN EXPLANATION OF FATHER BERTRAND'S DEPORTATION (REF A). THE PASTORAL COMMISSION ITSELF PUBLISHED A LENGTHY COMMUNIQUE STATING THAT FATHER BERTRAND (NOT BELTRAN AS ERRONEOUSLY NOTED BEFORE) TOLD THEM BY PHONE HE WAS UNCEREMONIOUSLY

TAKEN TO THE EL SALVADOR BORDER ON JUNE 5 BUT, BECAUSE REFUSED ENTRY, WAS KEPT BY GOH AUTHORITIES FOR TWO DAYS DURING WHICH HE WAS
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"THREATENED WITH DEATH UNTIL ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, WHEN SENT BY PLANE TO NEW ORLEANS AT 3:30 P.M."

3. THE COMMUNIQUE DENIES FATHER BERTRAND WAS IN CONTACT WITH SANDINISTAS, AND STATES HE WAS IN THE PROCESS OF OBTAINING HIS RESIDENCE PAPERS. IT PROTESTS THE AUTHORITIES NOT HAVING ADVISED OR CONSULTED THE CHURCH BEFORE TAKING THIS ACTION AND, AS SUCH, CLAIMS

VIOLATION OF FATHER BERTRAND'S HUMAN RIGHTS BECAUSE HE WAS NOT ALLOWE
D
TO COMMUNICATE WITH ANYBODY AND WAS BADLY TREATED FOR 48 HOURS. THE
COMMUNIQUE THEN ASKS "THAT WE BE GIVEN A CLARIFICATION OF THE FACTS
AND THE REAL MOTIVES THAT CAUSED FATHER BERTRAND'S DEPORTATION."
IT CONTINUES "WE ASK OURSELVES, IF IT WAS REALLY NICARAGUA WHICH
PRESSURED FOR HIS EXPULSION, THIS WOULD BE A SHAMEFUL PRECEDENT OF
SUBMISSION TO THE SOMOZA REGIME. THE PERTINENT CLARIFICATIONS SEEMS
TO US INDISPENSABLE FOR A GOVERNMENT WHICH WISHES TO RESPECT HUMAN
RIGHTS. IF THE REASONS FOR HIS EXPLUSION WERE NOT CLEARLY PROVEN THEN
FATHER EVARISTO SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO OUR COUNTRY TO
CONTINUE HIS EVANGELIC MISSION."

4. IN AN EDITORIAL JUNE 8, "LA PRENSA" DEPLORED THE POOR HANDLING
OF FATHER BERTRAND'S CASE, AMONG OTHERS, AND MAINTAINED THE GOVERNMEN
T
HAD CREATED UNNECESSARY PROBLEMS FOR ITSELF. "PRENSA'S" OBJECTIONS
WERE NOT TO THE DEPORTATION ITSELF. THE PAPER CLAIMS THAT BERTRAND,
"ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL INFORMATION, WAS IN CONTACT WITH
SANDINISTAS AND HIS TRAVELS IN THE FRONTIER AREA WERE OF CONCERN."
THE PAPER EMPHASIZED THAT IT DOES NOT OBJECT TO THE ENFORCEMENT OF
THE "TRANQUILITY OF THE FRONTIER ZONE AND RESPECT FOR THE IMMIGRATION
LAWS OF THE COUNTRY," BUT ONLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF
THE MATTER HAS BROUGHT ABOUT A CONFLICT WITH THE CHURCH. ONE JUNE
17, "PRENSA" EDITORIALIZED SOMEWHAT MORE STRONGLY AGAINST THE
ARBITRARY TREATMENT GIVEN FATHER BERTRAND AND SUPPORTED THE
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PASTORAL COMMISSION'S REQUESTS.

5. SINCE THE EMBASSY WAS VISITED BY THREE NUNS (REF A) WHO WERE
WORRIED ABOUT FATHER BERTRAND'S WHEREABOUTS, THERE HAVE BEEN NO
FURTHER REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM CHURCH MEMBERS.

6. EMBASSY IS CONTINUING TO SEEK MORE DETAILS, BUT THIS IS
COMPLICATED BY MOVE TO NEW OFFICES OF IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES.
FURTHER INFORMATION WILL BE REPORTED AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE.

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7. COMMENT: BERTRAND'S DEPORTATION APPEARS TO BE BASED ON HIS NOT
HAVING OBTAINED THE NECESSARY RESIDENCE VISA, IN SPITE OF SEVERAL
YEARS IN THE COUNTRY, WHICH PROVIDED LEGAL PRETEXT FOR DEPORTATION.
IT DOES NOT APPEAR TO RESULT FROM A SPECIFIC DIRECT NICARAGUAN
GOVERNMENT REQUEST, ALTHOUGH THIS CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED. THE
HONDURAN GOVERNMENT HAS AN OFT-REPEATED AND GENUINE DETERMINATION TO
ENFORCE THE NEUTRALITY OF HONDURAN TERRITORY VIS-A-VIS THE FSLN AND
SOMOZA. THERE WAS A PERCEPTION THAT FATHER BERTRAND WAS NOT A

NEUTRAL ACTOR, IN SPITE OF PREVIOUS WARNINGS (REF C, PARA 5) AND
THE GON HAS PROBABLY EXPRESSED CONCERN. THE CHURCH REACTION HERE
HAS BEEN LOW-KEY, PERHAPS RECOGNIZING THIS. IT IS NOT CLEAR,
HOWEVER, WHY IMMIGRATION DID NOT CONSULT WITH THE CHURCH NOR WHY
THE CHURCH DID NOT MOVE BERTRAND FROM DANLI AS IT HAD PREVIOUSLY
CONSIDERED.

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